



Want to Be a Better Lawyer? **ACT LIKE A PARENT**

IN OCTOBER 2020, MY WIFE, VICTORIA, DELIVERED OUR DAUGHTER, CELINE, INTO THE WORLD. Approximately two years later, in September 2022, our son, Jude, was born. It is one of the greatest joys of my life raising and watching our two children grow. We always strive to raise them right, and they have taught us so many lessons about life and, for me, lessons about the practice of law.

Some of the daily challenges of raising children can often be found in the practice of law, including managing conflict, balancing the needs of numerous people, strong communication skills, and the value of patience. It is also my belief that treating others as you would your own children would improve civility in the practice and improve the legal community for all of us. I reflect in this article on lessons parenting teaches us that make us better lawyers.

EMPATHY: Parenting fosters empathy. As a parent, you are constantly trying to understand the needs of your children and the reasons for their behavior. Clients are similar. They come to lawyers in vulnerable moments and trust in your ability to understand their concerns and provide solutions. Parenting teaches us to listen, ask, and understand another person before we offer solutions. An empathetic listener builds trust in the relationship and more effectively communicates and persuades.

PATIENCE: For anyone who has played *Dark Souls* or any of the games in that progeny, you know that patience is the key to success. The game is filled with puzzles and complicated battles that require careful observation, strategy, planning, and many times multiple attempts. Parenting also teaches you patience in dealing with repetitive tasks, like asking your children to clean up their rooms, make their beds, do their homework, practice their Spanish, or go to bed on time.

The practice of law also requires significant patience. The legal process is lengthy with often slow progress. We frequently find ourselves placed in a mentally taxing adversarial environment. Even internal conflicts may arise when revising a document for the umpteenth time based on the desires of a partner or client. Acting as a parent and remaining patient in these situations makes you a more effective lawyer in reaching your goals.

COMMUNICATION: Parenting involves juggling numerous tasks including feeding, dressing, comforting, and supporting a child while also maintaining a household, work responsibilities, and personal commitments. This relentless demand on time requires significant multitasking and communication with all the people involved. Lawyers are also balancing the numerous demands of the practice. They must multitask and are usually managing several matters simultaneously. Both effective parents and lawyers must stay organized, on task, and communicate to help reach their goals. Acting as a parent and communicating with the key stakeholders, such as spouses, partners, colleagues, and clients, ensures a successful practice.

Parenting has helped me develop these and other key skills. Parenting is not only about raising a child, but also about developing yourself. The empathy, patience, and communication skills earned from acting as a parent make us better lawyers. These lessons are also found in all the games that we play.

I would urge you all to act like a parent toward the practice of law. Care for and nurture one another. Treat others as you would your own children. I believe our legal community would be better served and see more civility if we were to treat each other more like family.

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